

SELECT BIPARTISAN COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE PREPARATION FOR AND RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis Response to Comments by Democratic Leader Pelosi

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Tom Davis, Chairman of the Select Committee investigating Hurricane Katrina, issued the following statement today in response to remarks by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi:

“While Nancy Pelosi was hunkered down this morning issuing more partisan, divisive press releases, serious-minded Members of Congress were preparing to question former FEMA director Mike Brown as part of our investigation to get to the bottom of what went wrong in the response to Hurricane Katrina.

“This is the job of Congress. It is our responsibility to investigate what went wrong, what should have been done differently, and how to do it better in the future. In our system of checks and balances, the Congress has both the duty and the obligation to ask the tough questions the actions of government officials – local, state, and federal.

“This investigation will be both tough and thorough, which is what the American people want. The public, not me, and not Mrs. Pelosi, will be the ultimate judge of whether we’ve done our job well, and done it fairly. And the American people are smart enough to know that this investigation will go well beyond interviewing ‘one Republican crony,’ as Mrs. Pelosi put it in a press release this morning.

“Not only have I invited Democrats to take part in this Committee investigation – and several of them have – I told them we would invite any witnesses suggested by the Democrats.

“In fact, it’s been Democrats who’ve been demanding most loudly that we call Michael Brown to the Hill. For example:

‘But certainly the American people deserve a public appearance in the halls of Congress from Secretary Chertoff and FEMA Director Brown, just to give two examples.’

--Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) at news conference, 9/8/05

'As the principal oversight committee in the House, we have an obligation to conduct our own independent investigation ... we need to hear from Michael brown ... the government official most responsible for the inadequate response ... the committee should call him...without delay.'

--Committee on Government Reform Ranking Member Henry Waxman (D-CA) at full-committee hearing, 9/15/05

'I certainly, and I don't think anyone in Congress on either side of the aisle, wants to interrupt in any way the important work that is taking place on the ground. But certainly, former FEMA director Michael Brown has time on his hands. He's no longer in the position. He has time to be interviewed by all the newspapers.'

--Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) at full-committee hearing, 9/15/05

“Like these Democratic members, I do not believe we should outsource our congressional oversight responsibility. The American people don't want us to punt – they want answers, and they want them now. If there is a consensus down the road to establish an outside commission, so be it. The two are not mutually exclusive. However, a commission will take months to set up, and an eternity to finish its work. We need to begin now, while evidence and memories are fresh.

“It is unfortunate that Mrs. Pelosi is refusing to appoint members to take part in this important investigation. As reported by Roll Call yesterday, members of her own caucus are doubting Pelosi's desperate strategy and defying her order to stay away from the Select Committee's hearings.

“As one Democratic staffer told the paper yesterday: ‘We could do more for the people if we were on the committee raising hell than we can do when we are not on the committee. We're in pretty deep and it's not clear where we go next.’

“Today, both House Democrats and the American people will wonder why more Democrats chose not to do their jobs and question Mike Brown.”

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